

Spotlight on Terrorism: Lebanon and Hezbollah January 20-26, 2026

Overview¹

- ▶ The IDF continued attacking Hezbollah targets in south Lebanon and the Beqa'a Valley to enforce the November 2024 ceasefire agreement and prevent the organization's renewed military build-up. In south Lebanon and the Beqa'a Valley the forces attacked crossings on the Lebanon-Syria border used to smuggle weapons to Hezbollah, weapons depots and a facility of the Radwan Force. In addition, four Hezbollah operatives were eliminated, including the head of a weapons-smuggling network.
- ▶ Hezbollah continued to spread its propaganda narrative of steadfastness and sacrifice in the confrontation with Israel and the United States and the religious and ideological "legitimacy" of the weapons of the "resistance," and called on the state to secure the release of Lebanese prisoners held by Israel.
- ▶ The future of the committee overseeing implementation of the ceasefire agreement remains uncertain. Given reports of American and Israeli attempts to shift the focus to the political level with direct talks between Israel and Lebanon, and hold meetings at a United States base in Miami, the Lebanese government made it clear it was not prepared to make changes. The head of Lebanon's civilian delegation to the talks said if he received a mandate from the Lebanese leadership to conduct political talks with Israel, he wanted them held in Tel Aviv.
- ▶ Contacts are reportedly taking place with Hezbollah for a compromise on the issue of disarming north of the Litani River, despite the organization's continuing opposition to pressure that would lead to disarmament or a reduction of weapons.
- ▶ Lebanese judicial authorities initiated proceedings against Hezbollah supporters for insulting President Aoun amid growing criticism from the organization and claims that Lebanese establishment actions harmed the Shi'ite community.
- ▶ Qatar reportedly said it was prepared to rebuild three destroyed villages in south Lebanon under the supervision of an American company.

¹ Click <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the ITIC's daily updates as well as its other publications.

Israel-Hezbollah Tensions

The IDF

► This past week the IDF continued attacking Hezbollah targets to enforce the November 2024 ceasefire agreement and prevent Hezbollah from a renewed military buildup. The forces attacked four crossings on the Syria-Lebanon border used to smuggle weapons for Hezbollah, weapons depots above and below ground, a structure at a Radwan Force camp and other terrorist facilities in south Lebanon and the Beqa'a Valley. Four Hezbollah terrorist operatives were eliminated, including a liaison in the village of Yanouh, the head of a weapons-smuggling network and an artillery commander (IDF spokesperson, January 20–26, 2026). The Lebanese ministry of health reported four killed and 26 wounded in IDF attacks (*al-Nashra*, January 20–26, 2026).



The four border crossings attacked on the Syria-Lebanon border
(IDF spokesperson, January 21, 2026)

Hezbollah

► In a message for Wounded Fighter Day, Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem praised the organization's steadfastness in view of what he called "a confrontation led by the United States and Israel," and claimed that the "resistance" fighters² had blocked the IDF's advance in south Lebanon and foiled its plans of the "new Middle East." Qassem reiterated the slogan of "victory through steadfastness and sacrifice" and noted the religious and ideological "legitimacy of the struggle." He represented the wounded and shaheeds as a symbol of perseverance, resilience and continuation of the path of the "resistance axis"³ (Lebanese News Agency, January 24, 2026).

► Qassem told prisoners held in Israel and their families that their issue was a top priority. He called the release of prisoners "part of sovereignty and liberation," adding that stability would

² Terrorist operatives.

³ Iran, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Houthis in Yemen and the Shi'ite militias in Iraq.

be achieved until all prisoners had been released and the fate of the missing was known. He accused the Lebanese state of not making the issue its top priority and demanded that the state use all means to exert pressure on the states overseeing the ceasefire to make a serious attempt to secure the prisoners' release. He reiterated that "the resistance is our choice" and said martyrdom and captivity were also steps on the path to "victory" (al-Manar, January 25, 2026).

► The Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament claimed Israeli "aggression" and "violation" of sovereignty required making the "resistance" and the "army–people–resistance" the basis of national power. The faction rejected reliance on external actors and any change in the status of the weapons of the "resistance," calling for internal unity, avoiding incitement and strengthening state responsibility for defense, reconstruction and the provision of services to its citizens, while demanding that the government put the cessation of Israeli "violations" and implementation of reconstruction programs at the top of its agenda (website of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament website, January 22, 2026).

► "Lebanese security sources" said that in recent weeks Hezbollah had begun reorganizing its deployment in south Lebanon according to a model of "reduced footprint and enhanced fortification." The organization shifted from overt deployment to a layered, decentralized structure based on small, replaceable outposts, limited operational cells and the transfer of weapons in small, high-value units, to reduce exposure and preserve capabilities. According to the "sources," it was a tactical withdrawal within the same geographical area to avoid fixed targets and preserve an element of surprise. However, it also creates ongoing friction and a "gray zone" of constant tension which increases the risk of unintended escalation and indicates a transition in the south to a new phase of attrition and security ambiguity (Aram News, January 23, 2026).

The Lebanese Government

► The future of the committee overseeing implementation of the ceasefire agreement remains uncertain, as it is unclear if and when its next meeting will be held. Given reports of American and Israeli attempts to shift the focus to the political track with direct talks between Israel and Lebanon without involvement of external factors other than the United States, the Lebanese government said it would not accept changes:

- ◆ A "senior Lebanese official" said the meeting of the ceasefire monitoring committee had been postponed because of attempts to change its membership and limit it to civilian representatives, particularly because Israel wants to remove France from the

committee. According to "the official," despite criticism of the committee's performance, Lebanon is committed to its continued activity as a body for monitoring the ceasefire agreement, and warned upsetting it could have grave consequences. He added that the United States was pushing for its continued operation, but said it was necessary to improve its performance by exerting effective pressure on Israel to stop its attacks and meet its commitments (*al-Jumhuriya*, January 20, 2026).

◆ A "source close to the Lebanese government" claimed it was becoming clear that Israel was pushing for a shift to direct political negotiations with Lebanon without mediation, through meetings between official representatives in a third country, most likely Cyprus. According to the report, Israel was exploiting the postponement of the committee meeting to advance a new political framework and stricter conditions for Lebanon (*al-Anbaa'*, January 25, 2026).

◆ According to Hezbollah's daily newspaper *al-Akhbar*, the American administration proposed the next meeting of the ceasefire monitoring committee be held at a military base in Miami, with participation limited to representatives of the United States, Israel and Lebanon. However, "official sources" reported that Lebanese President Joseph Aoun rejected the request and insisted it be held at UNIFIL headquarters in al-Naqoura with all participants. Aoun rejected Prime Minister Nawaf Salam's initiative to raise the level of civilian representation, claiming that the authority to appoint Lebanon's representatives to the mechanism belonged exclusively to the president, Ambassador Simon Karam was his direct envoy and his status was superior to any other governmental rank (*al-Akhbar*, January 26, 2026).

◆ Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam rejected reports of an American intention to abolish the monitoring committee and claimed he had not been informed of it. Regarding the possibility that Lebanon would confront the American administration if there were an attempt to remove France from the monitoring committee, he claimed they were not in confrontation with the United States, a central partner of Lebanon, and it did not refer to the possibility of eliminating France from the talks (*al-Nahar*, January 26, 2026).

◆ Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri said Lebanon was fully committed to the ceasefire agreement and the committee, and rejected claims of surrender or concession to Israel. He said the committee was an integral part of the agreement and its role was to oversee

its implementation, but Israel was undermining its status, despite its failures to damage a framework which limited Israel's freedom of action and restrained its aggression (*al-Jumhuriya*, January 26, 2026).

◆ The head of Lebanon's civilian delegation to the talks, Ambassador Simon Karam, said the next meeting would most likely take place on February 25, 2026, but that was not a final date. He said it was still unclear whether civilian representatives would participate in the meeting or whether it would be limited to military personnel. Karam criticized Hezbollah, which he said provided Israel with an additional reasons to continue attacking when senior figures in the organization spoke of rebuilding capabilities. He said Lebanon had not yet received official notification of political negotiations with Israel, but added that if he received a mandate from President Aoun, Prime Minister Salam and Speaker Berri, he was prepared to conduct the talks "not in al-Naqoura, but in Tel Aviv." Karam added that he was in direct contact with the Israeli delegation, and the Israeli representative in the monitoring committee told him his superior would participate in the next meeting (Lebanon Debate, January 26, 2026).

► At the economic forum in Davos, Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam noted his government's commitment to rehabilitating the state, advancing reforms and restoring state control over all its territory, stating that for the first time since 1969 Lebanon was exercising full operational control in the area south of the Litani River, except for points which remained under Israeli control (Lebanon 24, January 20, 2026; X account of the Lebanese prime minister, January 22, 2026).

► Salam also met in Paris with French President Emmanuel Macron to discuss preparations for the international conference to support the Lebanese army and security forces, scheduled for March 5, 2026. Salam said his government was committed to completing disarmament across all of Lebanon in accordance with the army's plan. Macron said he supported economic reforms, an agreement with the IMF and continued French involvement in Lebanon's security, including the future of UNIFIL (X account of the Lebanese prime minister, January 23, 2026).



Right: Salam and Macron in Paris (X account of Nawaf Salam, January 23, 2026). Left: Macron tells Salam he is "the peace" in the Middle East, a play on words [salam is "peace" in Arabic], underscoring the gap between optimistic diplomatic discourse and a region rife with conflict and escalation (al-Jumhuriya, January 24, 2026)

► Foreign Minister Youssef Rajji met with a delegation from the Union of Municipalities of al-Arqoub⁴ to discuss the Shebaa Farms, their Lebanese identity, the exclusivity of the state in handling the matter (including contacts with Syria and the UN) and the prevention of political exploitation. Rajji said the Shebaa Farms were an integral part of Lebanon and a top priority for the foreign ministry, operating through diplomatic channels and based on international law and existing documents to prove Lebanese sovereignty, while pledging not to relinquish any part of the territory (Lebanon Files website, January 23, 2026).

The Lebanese Army

► A Lebanese military delegation left for a round of meetings with the heads of the American Central Command (CENTCOM) in preparation for army commander Rodolph Haykal's visit to Washington, scheduled for February 4, 2026, ahead of the conference in support of the Lebanese army in Paris in March 2026. Haykal is expected to present a practical vision for the continued disarmament of Hezbollah north of the Litani River (al-Jadeed, January 24, 2026).

► The Oversight Committee for the land borders defense assistance program held a meeting at Lebanese army headquarters, attended by army commander Haykal and the ambassadors of the United States, Britain and Canada. They discussed the implementation of the program and the next steps to strengthen northern and eastern border security units and to combat smuggling and infiltration in light of "security challenges." The ambassadors "praised the army's professionalism" and noted the importance of continued international support (X account of the Lebanese army, January 21, 2026).

⁴ An area about 85 miles north of Metula.



**The commander of the Lebanese army and the ambassadors meet with the Oversight Committee
(X account of the Lebanese army, January 21, 2026)**

Disarming Hezbollah

Preparations for Disarmament North of the Litani River⁵

► According to "sources," contacts are being held for a compromise with Hezbollah regarding its gradual disarmament north of the Litani River: confiscation of weapons in areas adjacent to the river and postponing dealing with areas in greater depth to a later stage, alongside consideration of freezing the work of the ceasefire monitoring committee and the possibility of transitioning to a new negotiation framework, including renewing discussion of the British initiative for "containment of weapons" inspired by the model of disarmament of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland. The "sources" noted that Hezbollah was raising the bar to advance "containment" of weapons in the north and transferring them to "custody" by the Lebanese army, while dragging the issue into a prolonged discourse on a national security strategy to buy time until a possible change in the regional balance, especially in the Iranian arena. Conversely, Israel, with the backing of the American administration, wants to exploit the current window of opportunity to impose a rapid arrangement, while failure to reach understandings might lead to increased military pressure and a wide-scale confrontation to serve as a "decisive move" against Hezbollah (*al-Jumhuriya*, January 24, 2026; *al-Jarida*, January 20, 2026).

► A "Lebanese political source" said Hezbollah's strategy to buy time was causing concern in Israel, which felt time was working against it. According to the "source," no substantive developments are expected in Lebanon at this stage, and the status quo may be disrupted only following an attack in Iran or a change in American-Iranian understandings. "The source" added that the work of the coordination mechanism was being frozen by American-backed Israeli attempts to advance security understandings based on buffer zones, while the United

⁵ See the January 2026 ITIC report, [The Completion of the First Phase of Hezbollah's Disarmament](#)

States does not commit to guaranteeing it will safeguard Lebanese sovereignty (al-Jumhuriya, January 21, 2026).



Lebanon, endangered by conflagration, walks a tightrope, balancing between politics and the military, with Israel on both sides (al-Madan, January 21, 2026)

Hezbollah's Position

► After meeting with the leadership of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party,⁶ the deputy chairman of Hezbollah's Political Council, Mahmoud Qamati, said the organization's weapons were subject to a "red line" which was not open to negotiation, and that no further concessions would be made beyond the commitments implemented south of the Litani River under the ceasefire agreement. He said Hezbollah rejected American and Israeli pressure to disarm or reduce its weapons, which it regarded as a source of "national legitimacy" and as complementary to the role of the Lebanese army in defending the state, and conditioned any future discussion of security arrangements on a full Israeli withdrawal, implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 and the preservation of Lebanon's sovereignty. He claimed the organization would support internal stability and reconstruction, but would not accept anything that undermined the status of the "resistance weapons" or presented them as subject to compromise (*al-Diyar*, January 20, 2026).

► "Sources close to the Shi'ite duo" (Hezbollah and Amal) claimed Hezbollah's positions were not directed against the Lebanese state but toward the states guaranteeing the ceasefire agreement, especially the United States and France, which, according Hezbollah and Amal, had failed to exert effective pressure on Israel to meet its commitments and had taken actions

⁶ The Syrian Social Nationalist Party was founded in the 1930s by the Lebanese Antoun Saadeh under the influence of fascist right-wing circles in Europe and took root in Lebanon and Syria. The party, which operates in Lebanon and Syria, holds a secular-nationalist ideology that does not recognize state borders based on the Sykes-Picot Agreement and views the Syrian person, a member of "Greater Syria," as belonging to a superior Syrian race. The organization's symbol is an inverted swastika, and its pro-fascist activists raise their arms in a Nazi salute.

which harmed Lebanon's position. They claimed the upcoming cabinet session would be decisive in advancing dialogue on the national security strategy, supported by Hezbollah as an institutional framework for addressing the weapons issue within state sovereignty rather than through external dictates (*al-Diyar*, January 21, 2026).

Growing Tension between Hezbollah and the Lebanese State Leadership

► Criticism of the Lebanese establishment from senior Hezbollah figures and Shi'ite religious and political actors has continued to rise, claiming helplessness, erosion of sovereignty and steps perceived as paving the way for external pressure and damage to the status of the "resistance" and to the Shi'ite community:

- ◆ Ihab Hamadeh, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, claimed the "escalating rhetoric" against Hezbollah was preparation for practical steps in relations with Israel, and reiterated that the organization was committed to preserving ties with the Lebanese president and to state sovereignty. He said Lebanon had fulfilled its ceasefire commitments while Israel continued its "violations" and was [allegedly] examining the possibility of expanding its control. He said any discussion of weapons or of a stage beyond south of the Litani River was conditional on withdrawal, reconstruction and the return of "prisoners." He rejected direct negotiations with Israel and emphasized the role of the Lebanese army as a guarantor and patriotic body, while maintaining a coordinated position between Hezbollah and parliament speaker Nabih Berri (Lebanon Debate, January 20, 2026).

- ◆ In his Friday sermon, Mufti Sheikh Ahmed Qabalan accused the Lebanese state of abandoning the south, the Beqa'a Valley and the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia, and claimed a systematic move was underway to weaken and possibly harm the Shi'ite community, with establishment backing or indifference. He criticized demands for a state monopoly on weapons north of the Litani River, arguing that such measures served an "American-Zionist project" whose objective was neutralizing Lebanon's power factors and leaving it exposed. He noted the role of the state in protecting its citizens and sovereignty, and warned against continued official silence in the face of what he claimed was an ongoing war against the Shi'ite community and the areas in which it lived (Lebanese News Agency, January 23, 2026).



Qabalan (Lebanese News Agency, January 23, 2026)

Given the above, a small but unusual demonstration took place in central Beirut, during which people held signs critical of President Joseph Aoun. The demonstrators linked the internal dispute to the security escalation with Israel using pictures of evacuation notices and Israeli threats. The appearance of the signs in the heart of the capital, at a sensitive time of public debate on sovereignty and security strategy, was perceived by observers as a signal of an increased level of political confrontation and its spillover into the public sphere (Lebanon Debate, January 21, 2026).

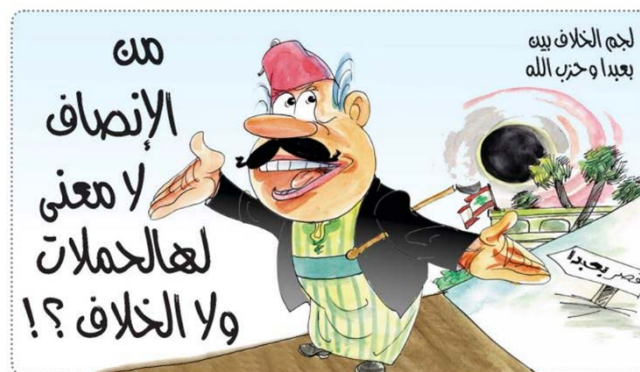


Anti-Aoun demonstrators in central Beirut (Lebanon Debate, January 21, 2026)

- According to later reports, Lebanese judicial authorities initiated proceedings against those who had insulted President Aoun, after Hezbollah supporters launched a campaign against the president on social media over his positions on the state monopoly on weapons and in light of continued Israeli attacks. "Sources" noted that the statements attacked the president using offensive language and accusations justifying a legal investigation, even if the presidency itself did not file a complaint (Beirut International, January 23, 2026).
- "Security sources" claimed that the tension between President Joseph Aoun and Hezbollah had turned into a confrontation over sovereignty and control of the state, especially the issue of weapons north of the Litani River. The presidency felt Aoun's policy of conciliation had not

changed the organization's actions and denied the state a monopoly over decisions on issues of war and peace. Aoun's call for disarmament was perceived by Hezbollah as a direct political challenge and led to hardened rhetoric and the freezing of coordination channels, in an attempt to block any move that would strengthen state authority. "Officials in the presidency" said they regarded activity north of the Litani River as a "decisive sovereignty test," either restoring exclusive authority to constitutional institutions or continuing a formal state alongside an armed force imposing a strategic veto on the national agenda (Aram News, January 22, 2026).

► After meeting with President Aoun, Lebanese Parliament speaker and Amal leader Nabih Berri said their relations were "excellent as always," despite tensions between Hezbollah and the president. They discussed the continued Israeli attacks in the south and east of Lebanon, efforts to assist residents of damaged border villages to return to their homes, and the issue of parliamentary elections. Reportedly, Aoun and Berri agreed to work to reduce tensions between Hezbollah and the president and to restore communication channels, adding that contacts were expected between the president's advisor and Hezbollah representatives as part of de-escalation efforts (MTV, al-Liwaa', January 23, 2026; al-Jumhuriya, January 24, 2026). Reportedly, after President Aoun noted his commitment to the state monopoly on weapons in a television interview, remarks that angered Hezbollah, Berri called him to congratulate him and gave him a "ten" (Asas Media, January 26, 2026).



Nabih Berri, speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, tries to de-escalate the confrontation between the Lebanese presidency and Hezbollah to prevent an internal political explosion over the issue of weapons and sovereignty (al-Liwaa', January 24, 2026)

► Hezbollah's daily newspaper *al-Akhbar* claimed that the objective of Berri's urgent visit to the presidential palace was to curb escalation and prevent an open rift between Aoun and Hezbollah. According to the newspaper, the tension had gone beyond a localized confrontation

and become a crisis of trust between the president and the "resistance"⁷ camp and the Shi'ites. Aoun's recent speeches were perceived as expressing alignment with a political-security line seen as hostile to the "resistance" and its support base, with a growing sense among the Shi'ites that the state was acting against them under the guise of sovereignty, and that Aoun was now trying to mitigate the damage to his reputation caused by the gestures he had made (*al-Akhbar*, January 24, 2026).

Opponents of Hezbollah

► The Christian Phalange Party condemned statements made by senior Hezbollah figures, especially secretary general Na'im Qassem, which rejected the state's monopoly on weapons north of the Litani River and threatened civil war, saying they violated the ceasefire agreement, were a rebellion against legitimate authority and attacked the constitution and international resolutions. The party office noted that the state monopoly on weapons was a national and constitutional obligation which could not be compromised, and called for accelerating its implementation throughout Lebanon, especially ahead of the elections, to ensure freedom of voting and a proper democratic process in areas under Hezbollah control (*al-Markazia* website, January 21, 2026).

Hezbollah-Iran Relations

► The Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament accused the United States of a hegemonic policy which threatened the sovereignty of states in the region and praised Iran and its leader Ali Khamenei for their steadfastness in the face of American-Israeli pressure (Hezbollah faction website, January 22, 2026).

► A solidarity rally with Iran was held in Beirut with the participation of political, religious and social figures. The deputy chairman of Hezbollah's Political Council, Mahmoud Qamati, said that Iran was the spearhead in the struggle against "American hegemony" and was targeted because of its support for causes perceived as just, especially the Palestinian issue. Qamati criticized demands in Lebanon for disarmament of the "resistance" while remaining silent in the face of Israeli attacks, and warned against government alignment with external dictates or damage to sovereignty (*al-Diyar*, January 24, 2026).

Hezbollah's Reconstruction

⁷ Hezbollah and the other terrorist organizations operating in Lebanon.

► According to "sources," behind the harsh rhetoric of Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem lies growing internal turmoil within the organization and its social base because of the heavy costs of destruction, displacement, loss of property and economic collapse with no horizon of reconstruction or compensation. According to the "sources," within the Shi'ite community, its businesspeople, returnees from the diaspora and residents of south Lebanon and Dahiyeh al-Janoubia, there is growing disappointment with the continuing confrontation and the lack of deterrent achievements, casting doubt on the utility of the current policy. Meanwhile, concern is increasing within the organization's leadership over the erosion of its image and the possibility of demographic change in the south and in Beirut's suburbs, alongside cautious internal criticism of growing dependence on Tehran's decisions and of the limitations of Qassem's leadership compared with his predecessor, Hassan Nasrallah (*Nidaa' al-Watan*, January 23, 2026).

► According to claims, Hezbollah has recently intensified organizational and social activity north of the Litani River, as part of reactivating the "resistance battalions." The activity, represented as "humanitarian assistance," focuses on weakened Sunni and Palestinian communities and is accompanied by the recruitment of operatives, operation of civilian-security networks and offers of economic incentives, part of an effort to establish political and security influence and to compensate for the organization's weakening after the recent blows it sustained. Meanwhile, the Palestinian leaderships have begun tightening oversight in the camps and blocking Hezbollah's recruitment attempts, concerned by security and sectarian implications, and the link between such moves and Hezbollah's preparations for elections and for the next stage of the discussion on disarmament north of the Litani River (*Nidaa' al-Watan*, January 23, 2026).

The Reconstruction of Lebanon

► Qatar reportedly expressed willingness to rebuild three destroyed villages in south Lebanon, similar to the assistance it provided after the Second Lebanon War in 2006. According to the report, Qatar contacted the American administration and received guarantees that the project would not be harmed by Israeli attacks, and in addition an American company was expected to manage and oversee the project. It was further noted that Qatar would allocate \$480 million for projects and investments to be carried out under the supervision of the relevant Lebanese government ministries (*al-Nahar*, January 24, 2026).

- ▶ Lebanese Minister of Labor Muhammad Haidar met with the Chinese ambassador to Lebanon, Chen Chuandong, and to discuss increased bilateral cooperation, especially projects for the ministry of labor and Chinese assistance for Lebanon's reconstruction, particularly its infrastructure (*al-Diyar*, January 23, 2026).
- ▶ Lebanese Minister of Social Affairs Hanine al-Sayyid said the parliamentary approval of a \$250 million loan from the World Bank for the reconstruction of infrastructure damaged by Israeli attacks was an important beginning step and was expected to enable the mobilization of \$75 million from France, but was insufficient to cover the full extent of the damage. She said the Council for Development and Reconstruction had begun conducting surveys and assessing affected areas, focusing on territories accessible to the Lebanese army, given the continued "occupation" of villages in the south. She noted that a broad reconstruction effort was expected in 2026, especially in the south of the country, adding that the return of local residents depended on the extent of destruction and improvement in security stability as a condition for economic recovery (*al-Diyar*, January 23, 2023).